CHRISTMAS DAY.

A

POEM.

By *JOHN PRICE*, B. D. *&c.*

——— *Ordinatis Seculis*
Rerumque digeſto Statu,
Fundator ipſe et Artifex
Permanſit in Patris Sinu:
Donec rotata annalium
Tranſvolverentur Millia:
Atque ipſe peccantem diu
Dignatus Orbem viſeret.

Aur. Prud. Hymn. 8 Kal. Januar.

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MDCCXLV.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

A

POEM.

By JOHN PRICE, LL.D. &c.

To the HONOURABLE

Mrs. *GREVILE*,

The following

POEM

Is Inſcrib'd, with all Reſpect, by

Her LADYSHIP'S

Moſt obedient, and

moſt humble Servant,

JOHN PRICE

15 MAY 62

CHRISTMAS DAY.

A

POEM.

HAIL ſacred Day, diſtinguiſh'd by the Birth
Of greater Prince than Rulers of the Earth.
The Son of God, the Prince of Peace is born,
Nor Pomp, nor Grandeur did his Birth adorn.
Our Saviour come; the joyous News proclaim;
With Hymns divine extol the ſacred Name;
Mankind reſtores, the grateful Notes prolong;
The Angels liſten, and approve the Song.
May he who guides to Good direct my Lays,
And Thoughts well ſuited to this Subject raiſe.

The *Roman* Scepter when *Auguſtus* ſway'd
Bellona's long-felt Rage by him was ſtay'd:
Thoſe Gates were ſhut which long had open ſtood,
And Fields no more diſtain'd with human Blood.
The World all Peace, he publiſh'd a Decree,
That all his Subjects Names enroll'd ſhou'd be.
Joſeph and *Mary* then to *Bethlehem* went,
As if by Providence directly ſent.
Whilſt there, ſhe travail'd, travail'd without Pain:
Thus were the Prophet's Words nor fond, nor vain:
For by that great and wonderful Event
Was brought about their full Accompliſhment.
He ſaid *, That City then of little Fame,
Of great Renown ſhou'd be, and ſo became;
In that it did that Governor afford,
Which was to be the People *Iſra'l*'s Lord.
In neighb'ring Fields whilſt watchful Shepherds keep,
Their Flocks all Night, not, as the modern, ſleep,
In Heav'n they ſee a more than common Light,
Of Starlike Form, but never Star ſo bright:

* Micah v. 2.

BRITISH MUSEUM 15 62 MAY

On

On Earth an Angel meets their wondring Eyes;
Their florid Cheeks forget their native Dyes.
Surpriz'd, amaz'd, appall'd with Fear they ſtood;
The wonted Heat forſook the crimſon Flood. *
This holy Meſſenger their Fright perceives;
With Words, like theſe, he ſoon their Breaſts relieves.

" Be not afraid; important News I bring;
" Which when you hear, with Joy your Hearts will ſpring:
" Such Joy as Men have never felt before;
" And will remain when Time ſhall be no more.

" The Star you ſee, and juſtly ſo admire
" Shews he is come, the Nation's ſtrong Deſire.
" In *David*'s City born this Day you'll find
" The Saviour *Chriſt*, Redeemer of Mankind."
Whilſt to theſe Words attentive Ear they lend
An Hoſt angelic came; their Songs aſcend
In Notes Seraphic to the B'ing Supreme:
This the great Subject, this the noble Theme:

* ——— Frigidus horror
Membra quatit, geliduſque coit formidine ſanguis.

" All Glory be to Him who rules on high,
" Th' immortal God, tremendous Majeſty,
" The World's Creator, conſtant Source of Love,
" In whom we live, our Being have, and move:
" What Happineſs to Men is here deſign'd!
" What Peace on Earth is God to grant inclin'd!
Theſe Things the Shepherds in their Minds revolve,
And to the City ſtrait to go reſolve.
They're ſoon convinc'd of all the Angel ſaid;
The Babe they ſaw, and in a Manger laid.
Tho' mean the Cradle, far from mean the Child:
For He a God, as well as Man, is ſtil'd:
Not only ſtil'd, but is both God and Man:
By Him, as God, the World to be began.
He gave the Word, all Things in Order came,
They all from Him receiv'd their preſent Frame,
Save Man alone, indiſputable Lord
Of all with which or Land or Sea is ſtor'd;
Dominion large! of that he ſtill can boaſt:
But o'er himſelf, alaſs! his Power loſt.
He once his Maker's fair Reſemblance bore;
Repleat with Knowledge, and with Graces ſtore:

But

But by one Act he ſoon himſelf diſgrac'd;
His Beauty ſtain'd, and Frame of Mind defac'd.
Clear erſt his Judgment; what was right approv'd
To what was ſo his Will obſequious mov'd:
No gloomy Thought; ſerene and calm his Breaſt;
No anxious Cares did then diſturb his Reſt.
All Virtue's Paths unerringly cou'd range;
All pleaſant Steps. But ſoon how great the Change!
What dire Effects has Diſobedience wrought!
With Evils pregnant muſt that Tree be thought;
Whoſe Fruit but taſted, Man ſtrait mortal grew;
Fear-ſtriking Death and Seas of Woe enſue.
Not equal Evils fill'd *Pandora*'s Box,
Which *Epimetheus* without Thought unlocks.
Strong Paſſions ſwarm, his Appetites bear ſway;
Dethron'd his Reaſon; all-perplext his Way.
For Truths more Errors in his Mind ariſe
Than Arms *Briareus* had, or *Argus* Eyes:
And if one himſelf he chance to weed,
Then, Hydra like, more in its Place ſucceed.
More Wiſdom ſeeking ſtill leſs wiſe becomes:
From Wrong to Wrong his Mind inceſſant roams.

His

His Life a wretched Change from bad to worſe;
One Truth he knows, of that he feels the Force;
That great his Guilt and with that Guilt Remorſe.
Heart-galling Truth! How bitter is the Thought!
Once full of Bliſs, but now from Bliſs remote;
God's Will contemn'd, the Conſequents how dire!
Thoſe all deſcend to Children from their Sire.
God's Favour loſt; cou'd Rebels that regain?
His Wrath incens'd; what cou'd that Wrath reſtrain?
That to appeaſe Men ſundry Methods us'd;
None cou'd attone for Mercy ſo abus'd.
Wrong all their Ways; his Anger to avert
Life-guarding Laws to Cruelty pervert.
Our Nature's ſtrongeſt Ties and Dictates break,
With Sons and Daughter's Blood the Altars reek.
Such Ignorance diffus'd o'er human Race,
That Wood and Stone of God ſupply the Place.*

* Nam cæca vis mortalium
Venerans inanes Nænias,
Vel Æra vel Saxa algida
Vel Ligna credebat Deum.

To

To ſuch they bow and filthy Worſhip pay;
To helpleſs Things for their Aſſiſtance pray;
Of what is weak they Health and Vigour crave;
From lifeleſs Matter Life expect to have.
How greatly fall'n! How abject is the Thought,
When Man adores what his own Hand has wrought! *
Thus Minds diſrob'd of ſhining Beams of Light
Take Things for God which are devoid of Sight,
So Satan rul'd; that Pow'r his Wiles obtain'd;
Mankind enſlav'd; to fatal Errors chain'd.
From this ſad Bondage, and his School of Vice,
Whence Woes and Deaths as from their Fountain riſe,
This Day Men free'd; a better Maſter brought,
Who taught what Men before in vain had ſought.
The Cauſe of Death and Woes he open lays
The dreadful Conſequence of Sin diſplays:
Our wandring Steps from its dark Mazes brings,
And Death deſpoils of all its hurtful Stings.
Heart-glad'ning Truth with Majeſty appears,
Aſſent commands; to all itſelf endears:

* Homines, & nominis ſui & rationis obliti, timent opera digitorum ſuorum; quaſi quicquam eſſe poſſit Artifice ſuo majus. LACT.

Errors

Errors give Way, its awful Preſence ſhun,
Or vaniſh, as Dews 'fore the Morning Sun.
Vices no longer dare triumphant ride;
But Coverts ſeek their ugly Form to hide.
To Idol-Temples we no more reſort,
But to the King of Kings more hallow'd Court;
Where his great Name, his Truth, and Love are prais'd,
Whoſe bare *Fiat* the World's great Fabrick rais'd.
Ourſelves to him addreſs, whoſe Mercy ſtands
O'er all a Guardian, and with even Hands
His Bounty ſpreads; ſupports the drooping Head:
The Low to Honour lifts, to Life the Dead.
With holy Love and Hope our Souls are fill'd;
And from our Lips Awe-ſhewing Words diſtill'd.
Relenting Sinners, all that deeply mourn
Their high Affronts, and to their Duty turn,
Have Grounds to hope he favourably hears
The moving Eloquence of pious Tears;
The Grace implor'd and Pardon ſhall obtain,
If they good Works be careful to maintain.
Of thoſe good Works moſt perfect Rules we have;
Full Proof of that our Teacher's Practice gave.

His Paths when trod, what Pleaſures fill the Soul!
In thoſe we'll tread, can any us controul?
Our Foe with all his Snares we may defy;
To him Reſiſtance make he'll from you fly.
That grand Seducer's tempting Arts and Wiles,
And luring Baits, with which he Men beguiles:
Much of their Power loſt, the whole wou'd loſe
Wou'd Men their *Shield*, their *Sword*, and *Helmet* uſe.
Arm'd with theſe againſt his fiery Darts,
They'd quell his Force, unhurt preſerve their Hearts,
Sure Conqueſt gain o'er him, o'er all the Foes,
That blaſt our Peace, wou'd certainize our Woes.
The *Mural*, *Naval*, and the *Civic* Crown
Were juſt Rewards where gallant Deeds were ſhown.
More glorious their's who Satan's Wiles withſtood:
They conquer truly, who are truly good.
Pious their Hearts, and like their Hearts their Deeds:
Thus kindly'ſt Fruit from kindly'ſt Soil proceeds.
The Fountain clear, the Streams we not ſuſpect:
The Heart if ill, no Good from thence expect.

But

But this if right and ſteer'd by Laws divine,
Good Fruit thence flows, there Chriſtian Graces
ſhine.
When theſe combine, and Beauties all unite,
They deck our Souls like thoſe array'd in white,
Who near approach the Lamb's all glorious
Throne;
That ſpotleſs Lamb that did for Sin attone.
Amongſt thoſe ſo deckt will *G——la* ſtand,
Who from Religion's Friends may Praiſe command:
That well deſerves; her Life it's Power ſhews:
For to be good is to be great ſhe knows.
Hence 'tis the Poor in her have found a Friend,
They at her Door at ſtated Hours attend;
There Gifts receive; with joyful Hearts return:
Her Health their Joy; ſhe Sick, they ſadly mourn.
That ſhe th' appointed Race in Health may run,
And he that levels all and none can ſhun
May late her ſummon, all that know her pray
To Him, who Life can give and take away.
Cou'd human Merit claim the glorious Crown,
Gre—la's might. But Merit we diſown.
Preſumptuous all of perfect Works that boaſt:
Their Minds in Pride and Self-conceit are loſt.

That

That Doctrine, and the purgatorial State
Nor this Day's Teacher, nor Apoſtles taught.
Tho' *Virgil*'s Dream this laſt may countenance,
'Tis in Chriſtianity but meer Romance. *
Of Sin Indulgence, of Saints and Image
Th'ill-grounded worſhip, tedious Pilgrimage,
Maſſes for the Dead, ſundry Tenets more,
Inventions human to increaſe the Store
And Treaſure of the Roman Court and Church,
Mens Souls deceive and leave 'em in the Lurch.
It is ſo order'd by the papal Laws
No Bull be penn'd without the gainful Clauſe,
Somewhat to offer ev'ry Grantee's bound
To Altar, Shrine, or ſome Church to found,
Or Houſe religious to ſupport, maintain;
Without this Gift th' Indulgence null and vain,
If without Pay the Bull acquits no Score,
And this the Practice: Then God help the Poor.
For them that Fire's prepar'd, muſt that endure,
The Rich their Riches from its Smell ſecure.
But we no Happineſs expect or hope
From Cobweb Doctrine, nor from Bulls of Pope.

* ——————— aliis ſub gurgite vaſto
Infectum eluitur ſcelus, aut exuritur igni. VIRG. Æn. 6.

Our

Our Rule the Scripture, on that Rule depend:
Twas by the Aid of Guide unerring penn'd.
Therein we ſee God's Love to Men diſplay'd;
The Scheme in Heav'n for their Redemption laid,
How that's accompliſh'd by the Prince of Peace;
How he of Sin procur'd to us Releaſe;
And we thro' Faith conſummated by Love,
Shall wear the Crown prepar'd for us above.
That Crown he purchas'd. Oh! how dearly bought!
Immenſe the Price, all-raviſhing the Thought!
It melts us into Love; profuſely kind
The Bleſſed *Jeſus* his own Life reſign'd,
That we thro' him of Pleaſures Streams might drink,
Which not their Nature change, nor fail, nor ſink;
But even flow; tho' ſweet, they never cloy;
Our Taſte ſtill pleaſe and eternize our Joy.
Theſe Bleſſings great; our Gratitude excite;
That to expreſs let Hearts and Deeds unite;
With Voices rais'd let all his Name reſound,
Whoſe Gift, this Day, the World with Joy has crown'd.

FINIS.